

of both Europe and Japan, and, of course, to Israel. And we are watching very carefully these kinds of threats.

We do not aspire to eliminate any future risk from the globe by making peace with our neighbors, but we're clearly determined to make our future and the future of our neighbors better by reaching a full agreement about peace with all our neighbors around.

Q. Iraq and Iran, sir?

Prime Minister Barak. Iran and Iraq is a sources of potential threat to the stability of the Middle East and to Israel if they reach missile technology, nuclear weapons, and, by this, the combination to really launch them.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. President Clinton, you have met with Prime Minister Barak for many hours, and we all know that you have concluded some sort of a program to advance the peace process. Can you please tell us some of these details that you can tell us? What is expected in the coming days or weeks and when is the talks between Syria and Israel are going to be resumed? Is there any date?

And a question to Prime Minister Barak, what is your reaction to the meeting of Abd al-Halim Khaddam in Damascus with a few Palestinian organizations that are imposing the Oslo—the peace process? Do you think that it's a significant step for peace.

President Clinton. First of all, we have issued a very detailed joint statement. I don't know if you have it yet or not.

Q. I've read it, but it doesn't say specifically what are the coming moves.

President Clinton. That's right; that's on purpose. [Laughter] So you know—sometimes in this process, the less you say, the better. Let me say that you know that Prime Minister Barak has talked to Chairman Arafat, and they intend to talk again. And I have said that I will make it known to President Asad what I consider to be the very satisfactory results of this meeting and that this is an important time to restart the peace process. I think to go beyond that right now would be an error on my part. Not because I don't intend to push ahead in every way I can, but I just think it would be a mistake.

Prime Minister Barak. I can just add to this that I'm fully confident that when we will have something to tell, we will be interviewed by you, and we'll tell you, and the public will know. There will be no secrets when something really happens in the open.

On the other part of your question, I did not get a real report about this meeting, but if there was such a meeting and the Syrians really asked the terror organizations to reduce their level of activity, if that is true, it is, of course, good news for all of us.

President Clinton. Helen.

Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, there's an expression—

Prime Minister Barak. I awaited you. [Laughter]

Q. —that if you walk in someone's moccasins, then you'll know how they really feel. If you were walking in a Palestinian's shoes, how would you feel about occupation, annexation, incarceration for months, for years without a charge, without a trial?

Prime Minister Barak. I was elected Prime Minister of the State of Israel. I'm fully focused on the security and future of the Israelis. I am aware that, the same way that a person cannot choose his parents, a nation cannot choose its neighbors. They are there, the Palestinians; we respect them. We want to build a peace with them that will put an end to the conflict with all the sufferings that happen on both sides of this conflict. We are determined to do it. I believe that focusing on how to solve the problems of the future is a more, may I say, productive way to consume our time than dealing with analyzing past events or their interpretation.

Q. Well, they aren't past. They're very current.

Prime Minister Barak. We are working on bringing a peace that will create a different environment in the Middle East, and I am fully focused on this future, rather than on analysis of the past.

President Clinton. Do you want to take another question?

Prime Minister Barak. Please.

U.S. Role in Middle East Peace Process

Q. How do you reconcile between the Prime Minister's expectation to get your support to the further negotiations with the Palestinians, the potential difficulties that Israel will face, with your role as an honest broker?

President Clinton. Why are they inconsistent? I'm not sure I understand the question.

Q. It's a cultural gap.

Q. No, it's not cultural gap.

President Clinton. No, no, explain the question. I'm sorry, I don't mean to be dense, but I don't understand the question.

Q. We understand that the Prime Minister strove to get your understanding to Israel's point of view with regard to the negotiations that he will have with the Palestinians.

President Clinton. Yes, that's correct.

Q. On the other hand, America is going to play the role of an honest broker between Israel and the Palestinians. So probably there is a kind of conflict between these two roles.

President Clinton. Oh, I see what you mean. Actually, in this case, I disagree with that for the following reason. The Prime Minister has made it clear—this goes a little bit to the question Helen asked in a general way—the Prime Minister has made it clear that however he proceeds into the future in negotiating with the Palestinians that it must all be done by agreement, including the ideas of synchronizing Wye and going to the final status talks. I'm convinced that at the end of the road, anything they could both agree to would be in both their interests.

And I must say, I think—some of you may think this is naive, especially as long as I've been doing this—but I honestly believe that the most important element for success for an Israeli Prime Minister in negotiating an agreement with the Palestinians is being able to set aside the accumulated burdens of the past to at least see them with respect and understand how they perceive the legitimacy of their aspirations. And I have seen that with this Prime Minister. And I think when you do that, then there will be a way to work this out.

I think that in a peculiar way, the United States can only be of value to the Palestinians because we are so close to Israel. Otherwise, of what value are we to them? And because

we are, if we believe they have a good point that I privately and personally communicate to the Prime Minister or his designated representatives, it should carry more weight because they know how close we are.

So I don't see the two things as in conflict. I think that, in the end, they both have to believe they have won or there will be no agreement. If either side believes that it has lost, why should they agree?

Convicted Spy Jonathan Pollard

Q. Mr. President, did the subject of Jonathan Pollard and his possible release come up in any form during your discussions? It's now 8 months since White House Counsel Chuck Ruff requested the major U.S. Governmental agencies to offer their opinions on this. Did any of those agencies recommend or indicate that they would recommend his release?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, did President Clinton give you any reason to expect that Pollard's release may be a possibility?

Prime Minister Barak. Maybe I'll answer first, and it will make it more, smoother in a way. I clearly want to see Jonathan Pollard released, but I am of the position that any public discussion of this issue doesn't push forward the purpose of having him released. For many reasons, this is a subject that should be dealt with not in public, but at most, between the leaders of the two nations.

President Clinton. One more over here, and then we'll take—Sam [Sam Donaldson, ABC News], you want a question?

First Lady's Position on Middle East Process

Q. Sir, I'd like to take another crack at a question you've been asked before. You've said that when Mrs. Clinton expresses her opinions publicly she's just doing something in public which you've done in private before—that is, have disagreements. That's the American way. But when she talks about an opinion in which she takes the Israeli position on Jerusalem, doesn't this make it more difficult for you to be that honest broker that one of your colleagues talked about, sir?

President Clinton. No, no. For one thing—let me say, that issue is not one that—that's not the public-private distinction. The

Government of the United States, the executive branch, the President, is a sponsor of the peace process and a facilitator of it. In that context, those of us with positions of official responsibility who are all the time asking Israel and the Palestinians, we're all the time asking both sides not to do anything which prejudices final status issues—I have taken the position that my government should not prejudice final status issues.

There are many American citizens who consider, for example, Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel; Israel considers Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel. You heard the Prime Minister say that he hoped that when we had all this worked out, everybody's Embassy would be there.

The genius, I thought, of the legislation which was passed by the Congress and sponsored I think primarily by Senator Moynihan was that it permitted each individual Member of Congress and, therefore, imposed on everybody who might want to be in Congress, the responsibility of expressing their opinion on it, while allowing the United States to continue to be an honest broker through the waiver authority so we don't have to prejudice the final status issue.

The status of Jerusalem is, under the Oslo accords, something that the parties themselves have to work out at the end. So that's my position. I don't think there is any inconsistency there at all. I think that anybody who is ever going to consider being a candidate for Congress in any place in this country, or the Senate, where people care about this, might be asked about it. But we have a framework in our law, which I think is quite good, where people can express their opinion about it, vote for a law, support the law, but the President, whoever the President is, is permitted to honor the obligation of the United States not to prejudice the final status issue.

Q. But sir, the thrust——

Prime Minister Barak. ——of Israeli TV——

Q. Sir, may I just follow up?

Prime Minister Barak. Please, let the young lady—beauty before age. [Laughter] I'm not quarreling with your wisdom, but look, a young Israeli. [Laughter]

Palestinian State

Q. To both of you, Prime Minister Barak was mentioning that 15-month framework for the negotiation; do you see, Mr. President, and you, Prime Minister Barak, a Palestinian state at the end of this period of time?

Prime Minister Barak. I think it's too early to think of the results of the negotiations about permanent status that were hardly begun. And I don't think that you should interpret this 15-month framework as a kind of a deadline where everything should be either fully concluded and implemented, or the whole thing is blown up, blown apart. I don't think that is the case.

We have this framework in order that different players on different tracks with only partially transparent membranes between them could make up their judgment about what should be concluded in their own track, vis-a-vis Israel, while taking into account the fact that the others are continuing.

So without providing them with a certain timeframe they might be lost or suspicions would be heightened, which as you know, happens very often in the Middle East. So in order to produce a certain kind of common basis, common framework, and common understanding about how we intend to move, we shaped this timeframe. It could not be interpreted as more than this.

Q. What about the possibility of a Palestinian state?

Prime Minister Barak. Oh, this was the question, I thought—[laughter]. It's part of the permanent status negotiations, and I'm confident that the nature of the Palestinian entity will emerge quite naturally out of these permanent status negotiations. We are concentrating on solving at the same time all the problems that are on the table—the refugees, the border, the future of settlements, the problem of Jerusalem. And I don't think it's a very easy task to solve part of the problem without solving, at the same time, the other parts.

President Clinton. Joe says we were about to draw this to a close. But if you want to chew on me, I'll be back Wednesday; we're going to have a press conference. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Oh, wait, wait, I'll answer the Coast Guard question. Go ahead. This is important—further—what's going on for America today, so I'll answer this. Go ahead.

Search for Wreckage of John F. Kennedy, Jr., Aircraft/Conversations With Kennedy Family

Q. Mr. President, I'm told that you were briefed earlier today by the U.S. Coast Guard about their search for the wreckage of the Kennedy plane. Can you tell us what the results of that are to date? And also, sir, since the search became a—quote, unquote—"recovery operation" last night, have you had a chance to speak with any members of the Kennedy family, and if so, can you relate some or all of those conversations?

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all, I did speak with Admiral Larrabee this morning, and again I want to say I think the Coast Guard, the National Transportation Safety Board, the FAA, all the State and local entities who have worked for them have done quite a fine job here; and I'm grateful to them.

He was actually, Admiral Larrabee, somewhat optimistic that they would eventually be successful in this area they have identified, in finding further—at least further parts of the plane. And I believe it's appropriate that this search continue. So I think they've done a good job.

I have had, over the last 3 days, several conversations with Senator Kennedy, and I have talked with Caroline, and I have—but I think it would not be appropriate for me to talk about the merits of it.

Let me say that John Kennedy and his sister and later his wife, were uncommonly kind to my daughter and to my wife, and this has been a very difficult thing for us, personally, as well as because of my position. They are very strong people, and I think they are carrying on as well as any human beings could. But they need the support and prayers of our country.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Barak. Allow my please to add to it—to extend on behalf of myself and the Israeli people our prayers and thoughts to the Kennedy family that faced so many tragedies and now is facing another

one, a tragedy that I believe touched hearts of billions all around the world.

Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 178th news conference began at 4 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Rear Adm. Richard M. Larrabee, USCG, 1st Coast Guard District, head of the search and recovery efforts off the coast of Martha's Vineyard, MA, to locate the missing aircraft that carried John F. Kennedy, Jr., his wife, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and her sister Lauren Bessette. The President also referred to Mr. Kennedy's sister, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg. Prime Minister Barak referred to his wife, Nava; and Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam of Syria.

Joint Statement by President Clinton and Prime Minister Ehud Barak

July 19, 1999

During several days of close consultations, the President and the Prime Minister conducted a comprehensive review of the U.S.-Israel bilateral relations, the peace process, Israeli as well as regional security, economic and scientific development and cooperation. These fruitful discussions have produced important agreements and understandings in all of these areas.

Prime Minister Barak expressed his deep appreciation of President Clinton's special efforts to enhance the U.S.-Israeli relationship and advance the cause of peace in the Middle East.

President Clinton and Prime Minister Barak have reached a broad new understanding that significantly enhances the already unique bilateral relations between the United States and Israel, and raises their friendship and cooperation to an even higher level of strategic partnership. This new partnership is designed to underpin their joint effort to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The President and the Prime Minister have agreed on the need to assign a top priority to the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. They have also reached a meeting of